

In this economy we are all looking to save however we can. There are two services in our lives that are far overpriced - weddings and funerals. By the time some weddings are paid for the divorce is in full swing. At least that cannot be a worry with a funeral. There are reasons folks feel obligated to pay the high prices- religious or other convictions and beliefs, habits, feeling like a traitor to tradition or even being seen as miserly when thinking of 'shopping around' for better prices. A neighbor of mine so shocked a funeral director by admitting to him that she wanted an estimate for his services because she was going to his competitor before making a decision that he immediately started acting like a potential competitor and gave her a much better price. I have been in charge of only one family funeral and believe me one is enough. Luckily for me and unluckily for the funeral director, I was not emotionally distraught over the death as I was not close to the person. Therefore I was able to conduct business with my brain and not my heart. From this vantage point, I experienced the most outrageous treatment prefaced by "she would have wanted you to do this" or "I'm sure you would want this for her". Worst of all as I was looking at caskets (and prices) obviously trying to make a decision, she said "It looks so much better with someone in it". We all know what my next suggestion was, which started a war that would not end until all mourners returned to their homes a few days later.

My family was so satisfied by the way I handled this situation that they decided I would be the one to take care of others in the family as they died. I assured them that would never happen unless everyone agreed to be cremated. My family members had no problem with that. When my father died, my mother made his arrangements because he was a retired Naval officer who wanted to be buried at sea. She had him cremated and his ashes delivered to the Navy. She was promised she would be notified when a ship went out for maneuvers and ashes from others had been collected for the scattering ceremony. There would be photos and a nautical map showing where his ashes were scattered. When my mother died she had the same option and she stated her wish to also be buried at sea. My brothers and I, all in our 70's and spending most of our lives apart from each other, gathered in her home during her illness and were there at her death. I was executor of her estate so I had lots of paperwork to do. The cremation task was allotted to one of my brothers. One night as we all were reminiscing, I asked if Mother's cremation had taken place. My brother said the man at the crematory wanted him to bring a container that would hold 5 pounds of ashes. I looked through the kitchen cabinets and found a large plastic jar like one would buy full of mayonnaise if he had a diner but was probably used at home for sugar or flour. Before I gave it to him and as the evening grew later and we were getting giddy reviewing our lives, I took a black marker and wrote on the jar "Goodbye Mother Dear. We love you. Keep in touch" and we signed our names. A few days later I asked my brother when we would get the ashes back so we could purchase an appropriate urn. He called the crematory only to be told the jar had been sent to the Navy and was on the ship which was scheduled to go to sea soon. When the photo of the ship at sea arrived, I saw many boxes on the deck which would comfortably hold urns. I used a magnifying glass to search for a mayonnaise jar. None to be seen. Our only salvation was that we didn't write her name on the jar.

It may not seem so, but I related this story to encourage you to at least consider an alternative to the traditional methods. If you wish to entertain this idea, you might want to call the Cremation Society of GA or the Memorial Society of GA. Cremation isn't all that is offered. You may be able to get the earth burial you wish at a lower cost.

We should also consider organ donations as members of a society who should be concerned about our fellow man. Maybe we still have something somebody could use. Who knows?

Many of us have heard about house sharing- especially Housemate Match for those looking to share their homes for rent and/or companionship and others looking for a place to stay. I contacted Lynne Dyckman, at 770-578-7526 or lynne.dyckman@atljcc.org, to ask about the services available. She said Housemate Match is a non-profit, and her services are free, though one may make an optional contribution to Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta. She holds a 40 minute interview with each party, and does a criminal background check for everyone. It is up to the parties to decide on rent/no rent, or replacing rent with helping around the house: whatever rules they agree on.

Always keep in mind that your Team encourages you to join us in dispensing help and information to others. Just call 770-528-1446 and earn your wings! We'd love to say "Welcome Aboard".